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Western Sahara

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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I. General

1. A detailed account of general conditions and developments relating to Western Sahara was provided in a previous working paper on the Territory prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2087).

2. During the period under review, intensive efforts were pursued to break the impasse which had persisted since December 1995 in the process of identifying prospective voters in the referendum in Western Sahara. These efforts included several rounds of direct talks between the two parties, namely, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), on the United Nations plan for the settlement of the conflict of Western Sahara (hereinafter, the "settlement plan").[1] The direct talks, held under the auspices of the United Nations, concluded with the Houston agreements of 16 September 1997 and enabled the resumption of the identification operation on 3 December 1997.

II. Good offices of the Secretary-General

3. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/143 of 13 December 1996, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session a report on the question of Western Sahara dated 26 September 1997 (A/52/364 and Add.1). The report reviewed the action taken in 1997 by the Secretary-General in the exercise of his good offices with the parties concerned, in close cooperation with the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the activities of the Acting Special Representative and the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General in consultation with the parties concerned, and the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council containing an analysis of the efforts pursued to break the deadlock in the identification process. Since that report, the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with the current Chairman of OAU, has continued to exercise his good offices with the parties concerned.

4. During the period under review, and pursuant to Council resolutions 1131 (1997) of 29 September 1997, 1133 (1997) of 20 October 1997 and 1148 (1998) of 26 January 1998, the Secretary-General presented four reports to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/1997/742 and Add.1, S/1997/882 and Add.1, S/1998/35 and S/1998/316).

5. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report of 24 September 1997 (S/1997/742 and Add.1), following his exploratory visit to the mission area, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. James A. Baker III, informed the Secretary-General that neither party had indicated any willingness to pursue any political solution other than implementation of the settlement plan. He advised that discussions with the two parties on the implementation of the plan would be necessary, but that the only way realistically to assess the possibilities for its implementation would be by arranging direct talks between them, under United Nations auspices. The Secretary-General decided therefore to invite the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, as well as the two neighbouring countries, Algeria and Mauritania, to send high-level representatives to meet with his Personal Envoy in London, for separate consultations on that issue on 10 and 11 June 1997. Throughout the consultations and subsequent direct talks, Mr. Baker was assisted by the Secretary-General's Acting Special Representative, Mr. Erik Jensen, and by two deputies, Mr. Chester A. Crocker, former United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and Mr. John R. Bolton, former United States Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations.

6. In London, the Personal Envoy informed each delegation of the conclusions he had reached following his exploratory visit to the mission area, and explained that direct talks between the two parties would be necessary in order to address the obstacles in the implementation of the settlement plan. The talks would be private, would not constitute an international conference and would continue for as long as the Personal Envoy felt that there was progress. Algeria and Mauritania, as observers, would be kept informed of developments, but would take part in the discussions only on issues directly affecting them. It was agreed with the two parties and the two observer countries that complete confidentiality would be maintained and that no issue would be considered as finally agreed until accord had been reached on all outstanding issues.

7. Under the ground rules set forth in London, four rounds of direct talks between the two parties were subsequently held under the auspices of the Personal Envoy in Lisbon (23 June), London (19-20 July), Lisbon (29-30 August) and Houston, Texas, United States of America (14-16 September).

8. The first official direct contact between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO under United Nations auspices was held at Lisbon on 23 June 1997. The discussion started with the primary issue that had deadlocked the implementation of the settlement plan, namely, the identification of

applicants from three tribal groupings (listed as H41, H61 and J51/52 in the census conducted by the Spanish Administration of the Territory in 1974) whose links to the Territory were contested by the Frente POLISARIO. At the end of the first day, the Personal Envoy submitted a proposal to bridge the parties' differences in the identification process. Since both sides indicated that they needed to consult with their principals before responding to the proposal, the Lisbon meeting was adjourned on the second day. However, both parties gave their responses to the Personal Envoy within the following 48 hours.

9. This led to a second round of direct talks, held in London on 19 and 20 July 1997, during which a compromise agreement was reached on issues related to the identification of prospective voters. Under the agreement, the parties would not directly or indirectly sponsor or present for identification anyone from the above three tribal groupings other than persons included in the 1974 census and their immediate families, but the parties would not be obligated to prevent individuals from these groupings from presenting themselves. The parties also agreed, *inter alia*, that MINURSO should notify them of the results by number, but not by name, of the identification process to date. They further agreed that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should begin the steps preparatory to the process of repatriation of refugees in accordance with the settlement plan.

10. During the third round of direct talks, held in Lisbon on 29 and 30 August 1997, agreement was reached on issues related to the confinement of Moroccan and Frente POLISARIO forces. The parties agreed that the Moroccan armed forces would be reduced and confined strictly in accordance with the provisions of the settlement plan. The parties, as well as Algeria and Mauritania, also agreed to a compromise proposed by the Personal Envoy on the outstanding issue of the confinement of Frente POLISARIO forces. These forces would be confined in locations and numbers designated by the Special Representative as called for in the settlement plan, provided, however, that no more than 2,000 individuals would be confined on the Territory of Western Sahara east of the sand berm and no more than 300 in Mauritania. Frente POLISARIO forces over and above the number designated by the Special Representative for confinement in Western Sahara east of the berm and in Mauritania would be confined in Algeria. The locations for troop confinement in Algeria and Mauritania would be identified in coordination with Algerian and Mauritanian authorities. It was further agreed that this compromise would in no way alter or otherwise affect the internationally recognized boundaries of Western Sahara. During the Lisbon talks, the two parties also reaffirmed their commitment to the provisions of the settlement plan with regard to the release of prisoners of war and of political detainees, and agreed to cooperate fully to that effect with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with the Independent Jurist.

11. At the conclusion of the fourth round of direct talks, held at Houston, Texas, from 14 to 16 September 1997, Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO reached agreement on the code of conduct for the referendum campaign and on an important declaration relating to the authority of the United Nations during the transitional period. They also agreed on a set of practical measures for the resumption of the identification process.

12. In his report of 24 September 1997, the Secretary-General observed that, with the agreements reached, and the goodwill and spirit of cooperation shown during the talks, the main contentious issues that had impeded the implementation of the settlement plan had been satisfactorily addressed. He concluded that these achievements created the conditions to proceed towards the full implementation of the plan. He expressed the hope, however, that the two parties, as well as the two observer countries, would be as cooperative in implementing the agreements as they had been in reaching them. He emphasized that, ultimately, it was only the genuine commitment of the parties to the settlement plan and the agreements reached in the direct talks that would determine whether it was possible to fulfil the objectives of the plan. On that basis, he recommended that MINURSO proceed with the implementation of the plan, starting with the resumption and completion of the identification process. He indicated that, should this recommendation meet with the approval of the Security Council, he would dispatch a technical team to the mission area in October 1997 to reassess the resource requirements for the full deployment of MINURSO.

13. On 13 November 1997, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1133 (1997), and as indicated in his report of 24 September (S/1997/742), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a comprehensive report (S/1997/882), including a detailed plan, a timetable and financial implications for the holding of the referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with the settlement plan and the agreements reached between the parties for its implementation. According to that timetable, the identification of applicants to the referendum was expected to be completed by 31 May 1998, the transitional period was to start on 7 June 1998 (D-Day) and the referendum was to be held on 7 December 1998.

14. The Secretary-General's report of 13 November 1997, as well as his letter of 13 December 1997 to the President of the Security Council (S/1997/974), also provided an account of developments in the implementation of various provisions of the settlement plan, including the preparatory work undertaken by MINURSO to ensure the resumption of the identification operation by 1 December 1997. Extensive discussions were held by the Acting Special Representative with the parties, both of which reiterated their commitment to resuming identification expeditiously and to proceeding in accordance with the practical measures agreed to during the fourth round of direct talks. During these discussions, the parties were informed of MINURSO's plan to open 12 centres, 9 of which would operate concurrently. The list of sheikhs eligible to testify was updated and arrangements were made for selecting and agreeing in advance to a list of alternates. With respect to the convocation lists, both parties were granted a week to check the applicants' current addresses and a maximum of three weeks to ensure that people were notified, wherever they may be. Identification files stored in the United Nations Office at Geneva were returned to Laayoune in late October, requirements for the initial reopening of four identification centres were assessed and arrangements were made with the parties to have the centres restored to full working order. Following these preparatory activities, MINURSO resumed the identification operation on 3 December 1997 as planned.

15. On 26 December 1997 (S/1997/1023), the Secretary-General informed the Security Council of his intention to appoint Mr. Charles F. Dunbar (United States of America) as his Special Representative for Western Sahara, to which the Council agreed (see the letter from its President addressed to the Secretary-General on 30 December 1997, S/1997/1024).

16. In his report of 15 January 1998 (S/1998/35), the Secretary-General indicated that, during identification sessions at Laayoune for members of tribal groupings H41, H61 and J51/52, and at Camps Smara and Dakhla in the Tindouf area for members of tribal groups J51/52, 3,927 unconvoked individuals presented themselves at Laayoune and 495 in the Tindouf area; and in succeeding days, 8,613 individuals, mostly from grouping H61, also came forward at Laayoune. The Frente POLISARIO protested that Morocco was in breach of the Houston agreements with respect to the sponsorship of non-convoked individuals. In consultation with his Personal Envoy and in conformity with the Houston agreements, the Secretary-General decided to instruct MINURSO to proceed as soon as possible with the identification of those unconvoked individuals who had presented themselves on the days of convocation of their respective tribal groups. He also decided that, for applicants from "non-contested" tribes resident in northern Morocco, identification sessions initially scheduled to take place in Tan Tan and Goulemine in southern Morocco should be held at two northern locations where the number of resident applicants exceeded 10,000, that is, El Kelaa des Sraghna and Sidi Kacem.

17. Mr. Dunbar, in a letter to the President of the Security Council dated 19 February 1998 (S/1998/142), the Secretary-General informed the Council that his newly appointed Special Representative, Mr. Dunbar, arrived in the mission area on 9 February 1998. In Rabat, he was received by His Majesty the King of Morocco and senior officials of the Government of Morocco, and in the Tindouf area, by the Secretary-General of the Frente POLISARIO and other leaders. He also met with the Algerian authorities in Algiers and intended to proceed to Nouakchott shortly to meet with the Mauritanian authorities. Interruptions in the identification process occurred, due to the illness of sheikhs, sandstorms, disputes between the parties, and a change in procedures at the Laayoune airport for arriving and departing POLISARIO delegations, which was followed by a reciprocal change at the Tindouf airport for Moroccan delegations. These interruptions and other factors led to a perceptible increase in tension between the two parties. Some reservations were expressed by the parties regarding the Secretary-General's decisions contained in his report of 15 January (S/1998/35), concerning the centres in Morocco and the identification of tribal groups H41, H61 and J51/52.

18. In his report of 13 April 1998 (S/1998/316), the Secretary-General indicated that, while the total number of persons identified had reached 101,772, it was unlikely that the 31 May 1998 target date for completing the identification process could be met. The delay was due to the slowdown in identification activities in February and March and to the lack of progress in resolving the issue of the identification of applicants from the above-mentioned three tribal groups. In addition, the climate of mutual distrust did not facilitate the task of MINURSO. In the Secretary-General's view, the months of May and June would be crucial for determining whether the identification of all applicants that remained to be convoked could be completed by the end of July 1998 and whether a solution could be found to the problem of those three groups. If, by the end of June, sufficient progress had been made in the identification process and in the search for solutions to the contentious issue of these groups, in his next report to the Security Council he would submit recommendations for a revised timetable for the full implementation of the settlement plan, including preparatory measures for the establishment of the Referendum

Commission. If, on the contrary, no solution had been found to the problem of the three "contested" groups, and if a large number of applicants from "non-contested" tribes also remained to be identified, the Secretary-General would recommend that the Security Council reconsider the viability of the mandate of MINURSO.

III. Consideration by the Security Council

19. The Security Council considered the reports of the Secretary-General (S/1997/742 and Add.1, S/1997/882 and Add.1, S/1998/35 and S/1998/316) and took the following action:

20. On 29 September 1997, at its 3821st meeting, the Security Council adopted resolution 1131 (1997), the operative part of which reads:

> "1. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 20 October 1997, in accordance with the recommendation of the Secretary-General contained in his report;
>
> "2. *Welcomes* the other recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General of 25 September 1997 and *expresses* its readiness to consider further action in accordance with these recommendations;
>
> "3. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter."

21. On 20 October 1997, at its 3825th meeting, the Security Council adopted resolution 1133 (1997), the operative part of which reads:

> "1. *Calls upon* the parties to continue their constructive cooperation with the United Nations by fully implementing the settlement plan and the agreements which they have reached for its implementation;
>
> "2. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 20 April 1998, in order that MINURSO may proceed with its identification tasks, and to increase its size in accordance with the recommendation of the Secretary-General contained in his report;
>
> "3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to begin the identification of eligible voters in accordance with the settlement plan and the agreements reached between the parties with the aim of finishing the process by 31 May 1998;
>
> "4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Council, no later than 15 November 1997, a comprehensive report, including a detailed plan, a timetable and financial implications, for the holding of the referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with the settlement plan and the agreements reached between the parties for its implementation;
>
> "5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council every 60 days from the date of extension of the mandate of MINURSO on the progress of the implementation of the settlement plan and the agreements reached between the parties, and to keep the Council regularly informed of all significant developments in the interim period;
>
> "6. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter."

22. On 26 January 1998, at its 3849th meeting, the Security Council adopted resolution 1148 (1998), the operative part of which reads:

> "1. *Approves* the deployment of the engineering unit required for demining activities and of the additional administrative staff required to support the deployment of military personnel, as proposed in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General of 13 November 1997;
>
> "2. *Expresses* its intention to consider positively the request for the remaining additional military and civilian police assets for MINURSO as proposed in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General of 13 November 1997, as soon as the Secretary-General reports that the identification process has reached a stage which makes the deployment of these assets essential;
>
> "3. *Calls upon* both parties to cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to cooperate further with the Identification Commission established pursuant to the settlement plan in order that the identification process can be completed in a timely fashion in accordance with the settlement plan and the agreements reached between the parties for its implementation;
>
> "4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to keep the Security Council fully informed of further developments in the implementation of the settlement plan;
>
> "5. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter."

23. On 17 April 1998, at its 3873rd meeting, the Security Council adopted resolution 1163 (1998), the operative part of which reads:

"1. *Decides* to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 20 July 1998, in order that MINURSO may proceed with its identification tasks, with the aim of completing the process;

"2. *Calls upon* the parties to cooperate constructively with the United Nations, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Identification Commission established pursuant to the settlement plan in order to complete the identification of voters phase of the settlement plan and the agreements reached for its implementation;

"3. *Notes* the continuing deployment of the engineering units required for demining activities and of the administrative staff required to support the deployment of military personnel as proposed in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General of 13 November 1997 (S/1997/882), as further described in the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General of 13 April 1998;

"4. *Expresses again* its intention to consider positively the request for the remaining additional military and police assets for MINURSO as proposed in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General of 13 November 1997, as soon as the Secretary-General reports that the identification process has reached a stage which makes the deployment of these assets essential;

"5. *Calls upon* the Governments of Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania to conclude respective status-of-forces agreements with the Secretary-General, and *recalls* that pending the conclusion of such agreements, the model status-of-forces agreement dated 9 October 1990 (A/45/594), as provided for in General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, should apply provisionally;

"6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council every 30 days from the date of extension of the mandate of MINURSO on the progress of the implementation of the settlement plan and the agreements reached between the parties, and to keep the Council regularly informed of all significant developments in the interim period, and, as appropriate, on the continuing viability of the mandate of MINURSO;

"7. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter."

IV. Consideration by the General Assembly

24. At the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, reference was made to the question of Western Sahara by a number of representatives in their statements during the general debate.

25. At its 2nd meeting, on 30 September 1997, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) of the General Assembly decided to hold a general debate covering agenda item 18, entitled "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples", including the question of Western Sahara. During its consideration of this question, the Committee had before it, *inter alia*, the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/364 and Add.1), submitted in accordance with its resolution 51/143 of 13 December 1996.

26. At its 5th meeting, on 9 October 1997, the Fourth Committee heard four petitioners on the question of Western Sahara, among them, the representative of the Frente POLISARIO (A/C.4/52/SR.5). In his statement, the latter pointed out that, after the dangerous impasse that had deadlocked the peace process in Western Sahara, new perspectives had emerged. There were solid reasons to believe that the international community had before it a real possibility of bringing an end to the decolonization conflict in Western Sahara in a just and definitive matter. The Secretary-General's decision to designate Mr. James Baker III as his Personal Envoy to the Western Sahara and to entrust him with the task of breaking the deadlock had been welcomed by the Frente POLISARIO which was reaffirming its willingness to cooperate to ensure that Mr. Baker's mission would be successful. As a result of the direct talks between Morocco and Frente POLISARIO, both parties had reached agreements capable of overcoming the problems that had thus far prevented, or could prevent in the future, the implementation of the Peace Plan.

27. The progress achieved towards placing the referendum of Western Sahara on a correct course was tangible. The previous deadlock was replaced by a new and positive dynamic, which could and must culminate in a referendum of unquestionable credibility for the Sahrawi people and thus, for the international community. Achievements such as these had been goals of the Special Committee of 24, and therefore of the Fourth Committee, for the past 30 years. The two bodies should feel encouraged because after their perseverance in following the decolonization process in Western Sahara, especially during its most difficult moments, tangible results may finally be borne.

28. At this crucial moment, the United Nations and OAU had the historical duty to spare no effort so that the accords jointly achieved by the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco themselves, strongly motivated by this Committee's perseverance and the mediation of a prestigious statesman, may become solid ground for a new dynamic that nothing and no one should stop before its just and definitive conclusion.

29. At the 7th meeting of the Committee on 13 October 1997, the Permanent Representative of Morocco said that Morocco had not requested that petitioners be heard. It could have asked escapees from the Hamada camp to describe to the Committee their tribulations during years of imprisonment, destitution and deprivation. Morocco had assumed that, after the talks in Lisbon, London and Houston which Mr. Baker had helped to broker, a new phase had begun and that the other side would be pleased to see an end to the stalemate (referred to in the Secretary-General's report of November 1995), which it itself had created.

30. Although the petitioners had spoken about the Spanish census in 1974, what they had not said was that it had been confirmed during the Houston negotiations that the census was only one eligibility criterion among others. The petitioners had also referred in part to the well-known phenomenon of the exodus of populations to the north, but said nothing whatsoever about the eyewitness testimony of those responsible for operation "Ecouvillon" in 1958, during which, as indicated in "Combats Sahraouis", written by Mr. Patrick Reneau, some 40,000 Saharans had fled to the north. There had been no mention of one undisputable fact, namely, that the combatants, hounded by two armies also using aircraft, had had no choice but to head north. Mauritania, to the south, had not yet won its independence, nor had Algeria, to the east.

31. In order to facilitate the resumption of the referendum process, Morocco had agreed, at the invitation of the Secretary-General and with the intervention of Mr. Baker, to contact the current representatives of part of the Saharan population held in the Hamada camps. Morocco had participated in the Lisbon, London and Houston talks, which had clarified the points in the settlement plan. Morocco was of the view that, thanks to the work of Mr. Baker, there could no longer be any question about the clearly defined rules on the right of the Saharans to be registered where they were; Morocco was convinced that the clarifications made on the other objectives of the plan and its components, including the problems of troop confinement refugees and prisoners, as well as the code of conduct, would be respected by both sides.

32. As in the past, Morocco would continue to cooperate with MINURSO to organize a referendum. The referendum would prove that the Moroccan identity of the Sahara was not only a juridical and historical expression, but also reflected the attachment of part of the Moroccan people to the nation, its kingdom and its King.

33. Although the Moroccan delegation was convinced that the matter was exclusively one for the Security Council, it had worked to facilitate the drafting of a compromise text. It would explain its position when it came to considering the draft resolution on the issue.

34. At the 4th meeting of the Committee on 8 October 1997, the Permanent Representative of Algeria said that in Western Sahara, where a proud and brave people had been claiming for more than 20 years its right to self-determination, a new dynamic had recently been put in motion after years of deadlock. The appointment by the Secretary-General of Mr. James A. Baker III as his Personal Envoy had contributed greatly to the initiation of the process. The progress achieved by the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO during five rounds of direct talks had enabled global agreement to be reached on the pending issues that had prevented the settlement plan from being implemented. The two parties had also confirmed their commitment to cooperate with the United Nations, which was required by the settlement plan to organize and conduct a referendum that was free from all constraints both for participants and for accredited observers. The General Assembly should remain vigilant and continue to play a pivotal role by backing the implementation of the settlement plan and giving political and moral support to the Security Council and the Secretary-General in their efforts to hold the long-awaited referendum for self-determination as soon as possible.

35. Algeria, in its capacity as neighbouring country and official observer, would continue to give the Secretary-General and his Special Representative strong support in their efforts to implement the settlement plan and the agreements reached in Houston. The peace process in Western Sahara had reached a decisive point. The Committee and the General Assembly should therefore take note of the developments that had taken place and reaffirm the responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara and their support for the efforts of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the settlement plan. They should also urge the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO to continue at the same level of cooperation and to comply with their commitments. The people of the Maghreb hoped that the parties would sincerely

implement the agreements reached in Houston and that peace and concord would prevail in the region.

36. At its 9th meeting, on 27 October 1997, the Committee adopted without a vote draft resolution A/C.4/52/L.5 entitled "Question of Western Sahara". A detailed account of the Committee's consideration of this item at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly is provided in the related report of the Committee to the Assembly (A/52/613).

37. At the same meeting, following the adoption of the draft resolution, the Permanent Representative of Morocco said that Morocco had always considered Western Sahara to be an integral part of its territory and had, since independence, been attempting to recover it, including with the assistance of the United Nations. While maintaining his delegation's traditional reservations about the jurisdiction of the United Nations and the framework of the discussions, he supported the draft resolution and would continue to cooperate fully with the United Nations in implementing the settlement plan.

38. On 10 December 1997, on the recommendation of the Fourth Committee, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 52/75 entitled "Question of Western Sahara", the operative part of which reads:

"1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;

"2. *Takes note with satisfaction* of the agreements reached between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro for the implementation of the settlement plan during their private direct talks under the auspices of Mr. James Baker III, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, and urges the parties to implement those agreements fully and faithfully;

"3. *Urges* the two parties to continue their cooperation with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy and to refrain from undertaking anything that would undermine the implementation of the settlement plan and the agreements reached for its implementation;

"4. *Commends* the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for their efforts in reaching these agreements as well as the two parties for the cooperation they have shown, and urges them to continue this cooperation in order to facilitate the speedy implementation of the settlement plan;

"5. *Reaffirms* the responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara, as provided for in the settlement plan;

"6. *Reiterates its support* for further efforts of the Secretary-General for the organization and the supervision by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity, of a referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 658 (1990) and 690 (1991), by which the Council approved the settlement plan for Western Sahara;

"7. *Takes note* of Security Council resolution 1131 (1997);

"8. *Requests* the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to continue to consider the situation in Western Sahara, bearing in mind the positive ongoing implementation of the settlement plan, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session;

"9. *Invites* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session a report on the implementation of the present resolution."

V. Other developments

39. On 27 March 1998, the Commission on Human Rights approved without a vote a resolution on the question of Western Sahara, in which it took note with satisfaction of the agreements reached between the parties, during their direct private talks under the auspices of James Baker III and urged them to implement those agreements fully and continue their cooperation with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. The parties were also urged "to refrain from undertaking anything that would undermine the implementation of the settlement plan and the agreements reached for its implementation".

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-fifth Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1990*, document S/21360; and ibid., *Forty-sixth Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1991*, document S/22464.